



Military Medicine

Cardiothoracic Surgery at Tripler Army Medical Center

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The cardiac surgery program at Tripler Army Medical Center was started in 1985. In the ensuing 11 years, the program's steady growth has culminated in a mature, stable open heart surgical service. The Cardiothoracic Surgery Service consists of two military cardiac surgeons, three full-time perfusionists and one secretary. The operating and administrative duties are those customary to a military hospital. The team includes dedicated operating room technicians and nurses, anesthesiologists and is supported by a fully equipped surgical intensive care unit.

Tripler Cardiothoracic Surgery actively participates in quality assurance reviews both at Tripler and across all Department of Defense health care facilities. Tripler participates in The Society of Thoracic Surgeons National Database for Cardiac Surgery, allowing tracking of outcomes and a comparison of Tripler's results to a national standard. Regular consultation with civilian and military cardiac surgeons is utilized to advantage, including consultant visits from civilian congenital heart surgeons. The service contributes to Tripler's teaching mission by participation in the education of general surgery residents.

The cardiac surgery service at Tripler supports a busy cardiology service which includes full interventional capacity. Together, the Cardiology and Cardiothoracic Surgery Services care for a wide

range of cardiac patients from the Hawaiian Islands, the south Pacific and the Far East. Cardiac surgery patients include active duty military members and their families as well as military retirees and civilian patients from the Marshall Islands and other Trust Territories. Under a cooperative agreement between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veteran's Affairs, VA patients from the Hawaiian Islands have also received open heart surgery at Tripler. The geographic diversity and widespread catchment area underscore both the unique nature of this cardiac surgery practice and its contribution to the health and well-being of Tripler's diverse patients population.

Tripler Cardiothoracic Surgery supports the "Island Program." This program is congressionally funded, and was spearheaded by U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye. It finances medical care for severely ill patients from the Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Guam, Saipan, and the Republic of Palau. A Tripler cardiac surgeon and a cardiologist go to these destinations on a quarterly basis to identify critically ill patients with congenital or acquired cardiac disease. These patients are then brought back to Tripler where they undergo surgery and remain for a brief convalescence before returning home.

Tripler also provides a complete range of non-cardiac thoracic services to include esophageal, lung and mediastinal surgery. Both of Tripler's thoracic surgeons are recently trained in the most up-to-date techniques of video assisted thoracoscopic surgery. The nature of Tripler's patient population has provided the service a wide range of experience treating advanced and complicated infectious and malignant thoracic disease processes.

No description of a cardiac surgery program is complete without mention of surgical results. In the last two years, over 200 open cardiac procedures have been done by Tripler's Cardiac Surgery Service, with impressive results. During 1996, there were no deaths on either elective coronary procedures or elective valve procedures. These results compare favorably with the national average mortality of 2% for coronary bypass and 5% for valve surgery.



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